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U.S. Role in South Asia

JACK ANDERSON'S publication of a number of White House documents was a brilliant journalistic coup. But in the outcome, the publication of these fragments of the story has led to almost universal, really gross misrepresentation of the true White House role in the war between India and Pakistan.

To begin with, the White House had no effective role until very late, indeed until much too late in the day. Under the peculiar arrangements now prevailing in the government, the Middle Eastern division of the State Department is not subject to the same close supervision that the White House exercises in all other policy areas. And India and Pakistan belong to the Middle Eastern division.

Very early in the story—in fact shortly after the beginning of the rebellion in East Pakistan last year—President Nixon was warned that the problem was very serious indeed. He was then urged to handle the problem himself, but he decided against doing so.

There were the usual inter-departmental meetings, of course, but Secretary of State William Rogers and his Middle Eastern division exercised effective control of the problem for many crucial months. Secretary Rogers' initial reaction to the warning of a coming Indo-Pakistani war, which he got as early as April of last year, was that it "didn't really matter to us." Only a few weeks before the actual Indian attack on East Pakistan, the head of the Middle Eastern division, Joseph Sisco, was still assuring reporters that "there will be no war."

WHAT THEN happen was very like what happen in the Jordanian crisis of September, 1970. In other words, the going got so rough that the President took personal command. This in turn brought the

President's foreign policy advisor, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, continuously into the center of the scene, as shown in the Anderson papers.

Emphatically not shown in the Anderson papers, however, are the main motives for the President's handling of the crisis. When the sainted Indira Gandhi came to Washington, to begin with she said quite enough to reveal that she already hankered for the actual dismemberment of all of Pakistan, notably including West Pakistan.

The revelation took the form of a complaint by Mrs. Gandhi to President Nixon that in the British division of India, Pakistan had been most unjustly given "both Beluchistan and Pushtunistan." This means the entire area now forming West Pakistan's frontier with both Afghanistan and Tibet, and therefore, through Tibet, Pakistan's common frontier with China.

This strong hint by Mrs. Gandhi was not all the White House had in hand, however. It can be stated on positive authority that the U.S. government had "conclusive proof" of India's intention to crush the main body of the Pakistan army, in West Pakistan. This would have automatically led to West Pakistan's dismemberment—the result Mrs. Gandhi really desired.

A STATEMENT of uncertainty by CIA Director Richard Helms, in the Anderson papers, has been interpreted as meaning there was no such "conclusive proof." But Helms was talking there only about India's intentions in the next 12 hours. It can further be stated on positive authority that the "conclusive proof" in question was actually obtained by the CIA. And it was also the centerpiece of every one of the CIA's daily reports to the White House during the

On December 9, with Indian troops already moving up, Kissinger was directed by the President to ask the Indian ambassador, L. K. Jha, for assurances that India did not mean to follow up the conquest of East Pakistan by a major offensive in West Pakistan. On Dec. 12, Jha officially replied that his government could offer no such assurances—which was hardly surprising.

In the meantime, however, the President had personally intervened, on the very highest level and in the strongest terms, with Mrs. Gandhi's patrons and protectors in the Kremlin. The Kremlin had to choose between a very ugly showdown with President Nixon, or telling Mrs. Gandhi to stop her army in its tracks.

In consequence, the deputy foreign minister, Vasily V. Kuznetsov, was hurriedly sent to New Delhi on Dec. 12, to tell Mrs. Gandhi not to attack West Pakistan after all. This was the real cause of Mrs. Gandhi's declaration of a general ceasefire on Dec. 16. If anyone is any longer interested in facts, these are the true facts.

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